

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A conference endpoint, comprising:
2 a network interface for couple the conference endpoint to a computer
3 network;
4 a data conference initiation module coupled to the network interface for
5 transmitting a data conference initiation request to a conference server over the
6 computer network and for receiving a data conference code generated by the
7 conference server over the computer network.
- 1 2. The conference endpoint of claim 1 wherein the data conference initiation
2 module is further configured for transmitting a data conference invitation to a
3 remote device over a conference bridge, the data conference invitation including
4 information representative of the data conference code.
- 1 3. The conference endpoint of claim 2 wherein the conference invitation
2 comprises a string of Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) tones.
- 1 4. The conference endpoint of claim 2 wherein the conference bridge
2 transmits in-band audio signals.
- 1 5. The conference endpoint of claim 1 wherein the data conference initiation
2 module transmits the conference initiation request in response to a
3 predetermined user input.
- 1 6. The conference endpoint of claim 1 wherein the data conference initiation
2 module is further configured to transmit a conference join request to the
3 conference server over the computer network responsive to a received
4 conference invitation.

1 7. The conference endpoint of claim 1 wherein the conference code uniquely
2 identifies the conference.

1 8. A method for initiating and maintaining a data conference, comprising
2 the steps of:
3 transmitting a data conference initiation requesting to a conference server
4 over a computer network;
5 receiving at a local conference endpoint an unique data conference code
6 from the conference server over the computer network;
7 generating an audio signal representative of the conference code; and
8 transmitting the audio signal to at least one remote conference endpoint
9 over a conference bridge.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the step of generating the audio signal
2 further comprises generating a string of DTMF tones.

1 10. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of establishing a
2 connection between the local conference endpoint and the at least one remote
3 conference endpoint.

1 11. The method of claim 8 wherein the at least one remote conference
2 endpoint responsively transmits a conference join request including the
3 conference code to the conference server.

1 12. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of maintaining a list of
2 data conference participants at the conference server based on received data
3 conference join requests.

1 13. The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of transmitting
2 conference data from the conference server to the data conference participants.

1 19. The machine readable medium of claim 16, the program being executable
 2 by a machine to perform method steps wherein the conference bridge is a
 3 telephone line.

1 20. A conference endpoint, comprising:
 2 means for transmitting a conference initiation request to a conference
 3 server over a computer network;
 4 means for receiving a conference code from the conference server in
 5 response to the conference initiating request over the computer network;
 6 means for generating an audio signal representative of the conference
 7 code; and
 8 means for transmitting the audio signal to at least one conference
 9 endpoint over a conference bridge.